**Minutes for the Africa RISING training workshop on Innovation Platform**

**23-24 January 2014, Info Center**

**ILRI campus Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**Purpose:** To provide training and assist in in the application of a Participatory Research and Extension Approach and establishment and maintenance of innovation platforms to Africa RISING researchers and other partners.

**Day 1**

Peter Thorne made an opening speech and updated on research activities of Africa RISING during 2013 project year

* On various diagnostic studies
* On farm research demonstrations and;
* Planning meeting for developing the work plan and the seven broad themes identified in the work plan

Jim continued on discussing five outputs expected from the workshop and the need on reaching agreement on the workshop content. He gave a brief on the content of the workshop intended to cover on the two days.

Presentation by Jim about Participatory research and extension approach (PREA) focusing on;

* Critical success factors for the approach emphasizing on the need for broad based community participation and institutional partners
* -How the traditional linear “research-extension-farmers” approach is still at large though it has been left out as a viable approach. The presentation led to “innovations systems research” approach, putting a comparison of traditional vs. participatory approach
* -Effective facilitation was also raised on the presentation as an important role in insuring real partnership in innovation platforms
* -The different stages of practices of PREA and learning cycles in PREA were also discussed

The stages discussed were

1. Engagement and mobilization
2. Action Planning
3. Implementation and Experiment
4. Sharing Experiences and end of season evaluation

Some questions were raised by participants on if there is any new approach about PREA and different experiences on from participants on practically implementing participatory research and a discussion was mode on how to insure real participatory research.

After coffee break presentation about innovation platforms by Jim mainly focusing on;

* What is innovation? couple of definitions were forwarded with institutional diagram

Then the concept of IP was presented with brief definitions from literatures

* Types of innovation platform and the different stags in establishment at strategic and operational level showing a diagram on farmer to farmer uptake pathways.

Some of the most important IP roles mentioned from the list were

* Identify challenge and opportunities
* Encourage integration
* Coordination of R&D activities
* Strategic entry point etc.

Innovation Platform and leadership was also proposed at the operational level. An example of IP experiences and success stories were shared at Malawi on maize production and a diary IP experience at Uganda, wet land tomato cultivation in Zimbabwe, Rwanda experience on potatoes and ram fattening in Nigeria. A question was raised about who should usually be focal person should be and answers were forwarded that the focal person should be selected by the IP itself.

NBDC experience was presented by zelalem lema starting with introducing NBDC what it was all about and going into the process and steps that took place while establishing and managing the IPs. The steps mentioned were;

* situation analysis in Establishing IP
* Meetings in IPs
* Capacity building activities
* Action research

A digital story was presented to participants that narrates NBDC innovation platform experience stating what they are and the different stages and process it has gone through in the research sites.

Stakeholder analysis, roles and responsibilities, facilitation, development of terms of reference were discussed under establishment of IP in NBDC. The presentation continued depicting how local specific problems were diagnosed and prioritized, how solutions proposed and intervention sites selected through the IP. How ILRI IP team role eventually changed from facilitation to Backstopping was also briefly discussed. Major outcomes if the fodder intervention through NBDC IP and achievements were also shared to participants for the two year project implementation years.

Major challenges presented presented;

* Facilitation skills
* Problems with incentives
* Inconsistent platform participation
* High expectation and luck of adequate funds

The lessons learned from the intervention;

* Clear Incentives
* The need to community level IP
* More work on capacity building

A plenary discussion continued on how the NBDC experience informs the AR IP platforms and the need community level platforms are important to address some of the challenges encountered by NBDC.

In the afternoon a small participatory exercise was done by participants in different groups based on profession and intervention area to simulate the dynamics of participation both at the strategic and operational level. A group discussion was unfolded in the afternoon where four groups based on research areas (four) were sitting together to discuss how on each group envisages the IPs to operate.

The main group discussion topics were; Visioning of strategic and operational IPs, IPs function, governance, membership, chairpersons, secretaries, facilitation, sustainability etc. which are fundamental issues that needs to be addressed in establishment and operational phase. The four groups divided into the four regions and actively discussed the issues with one ILRI IP team member facilitating the discussion. Note was taken and presented by group representative on the different components across Woreda and kebele levels.

The Debre birhan group presented their case on the important components to be discussed at group level that exhaustively went through membership issues and roles and responsibilities. The group listed many potential IP Woreda members which some participants emphasized to be too many to manage. Oromia group also done it at woreda level starting with stakeholder analysis on the basis of their local context. The Tigray group also worked the different elements but presenting their case at the Kebele level. Finally the SNNP group shared views on similar topics but trying to go through the discussion points at both Kebele and Woreda level. Discussions continued on sustainability and who could potentially absorve the IP, how to make linkages between Woreda and Kebele IPs and if local government should chair the IP?

**Day2**

Jim started with giving a brief summary of what has happened the previous day and a brief discussion with some important comments on the IP type and functions that was developed by the four groups. Points were raised if the number of IP members listed at the Woreda level is enough and the possibility of exhaustively listing and the need to clearly mention the role and responsibilities of each IP members.

One participant pointed out that care should be taken not to let the Woreda IP dominate the Kebele IP but only needs to give strategic support to the community IP.

**Livestock Value chain assessment**

The deferent types of development approaches starting from subsistence to market driven and to value chain approaches was presented by Derk. He briefed how a rapid assessment studies are conducted for value chain study and some of the preliminary findings that his study generated through the methodology and some potential interventions for improved utilization of industrial feeds. The possibility of better AI service and some preliminary data on the Dairy value chain was also presented which touched traditional value chain assessment. Large and small ruminant value chain assessment was one of the information shared by Dark. He finally suggested how this study can inform African RISING project in its intervention.

**Summary of PCAs (Participatory Community analysis)**

A power point presentation of the PCA report was made by kindu. He tried to put the big document under major titles with precise information. Kindu discussed all the methodology employed and tools used (SLATE) to study and the major finding of the PCAs. The major livelihoods, dominant crops, institutions and challenges were some of the areas that are well assessed by the study.

**Africa RISING-Achievements and demonstration/on farm trials**

Brita started the presentation with listing partners of for the demonstration trials and went to discussing how participatory evaluation was made at mid-season and end-season and a brief result of the evaluation where many of the results manifested similar outputs at both evaluations. Framers feedback on demonstration on faba beans and potatoes was presented and finally research questions deducted from the study was shared for all the dominant crops identified (Poteto, wheat, Faba bean and Enset).

Valentine also gave detailed information about a possible small irrigated fodder development intervention at SNNP sites and the potential for sustainable intensification through the intervention.

Quick summary of sharing experiences and lesson learning on the mid and end of season evaluation and participatory budgeting was given by Jim. Jim then facilitated a discussion on the strength and weakness of the new proposed varieties of potato.

**Next steps at woreda and kebele level meetings**

Days are set for Jan 31 for Woreda levels and Feb. 1 and 2 for Kebele level site meetings at Debre Birehan to start the process of establishing IPs. Next visit to Mekele on the 5th of Feb. and the kebele level on the next two days (6-7 Feb). Debre Birehan participants listed potential local partners that will be invited on the first IP meeting. Main participants identified to be invited for Debre birehan are;

* Zone agricultural office head, Woreda administrative office, Woreda office of agriculture (head and extention), Woreda cooperative, Woreda women, children and youth affairs (head), Woreda water and mine office, Micro finance institution (private and gov.), Wedera Union, Woreda health office, Woreda office of small enterprise, Woreda office of finance and economic development, Woreda office of communication, Sunarma (NGO), Adihno (NGO), SLM focal person, Debre brehan University (College of Agri.), Debre birehan research center, Kebele farmer representatives.

The same list was planned to be also done for the remaining research sites.

Through the participatory budgeting exercise, Cost benefit analysis of the new system of focus or varieties was compared with the old verities’ in terms of different parameters for inputs and outputs like; labour, draft animal, fertilizers, seeds, chemicals etc. Finally the participants appreciated the organizers of the workshop and expressed their commitment to continue with the IP establishment and management.

**List of Participants**

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